

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 00759

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: APER, MARR, XF
SUBJECT: SECURITY AND SAFETY OF UN MILITARY OBSERVERS
IN LEBANON (U)

REF: JERUSALEM 592

1. SUMMARY: MEETING WAS HELD AT UN HEADQUARTERS 01MAR78
(CHAired BY USYG URQUHART), TO DISCUSS CONTINUING PROBLEM
OF UN MILITARY OBSERVER (UNMO) SAFETY IN SOUTHERN LEBANON
AND CONTINUING LOSS OF UN AND PERSONAL EQUIPMENT. USG
WAS REPRESENTED BY AMB LEONARD. ALSO ATTENDING AS MILITARY
ADVISOR WAS COL JONES (MSC). REMAINING THIRTEEN NATIONS
CURRENTLY HAVING UNMO'S STATIONED IN LEBANON WERE
SIMILARLY REPRESENTED BY PERM REP OR DEPUTY PERM REP.
MEETING APPARENTLY WAS PRECIPITATED BY INCREASING SWEDISH
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CONCERN UNMO SAFETY. UN POSITION ON NECESSITY FOR CONTIN-
UING UN PRESENCE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON WAS EFFECTIVELY
ARTICULATED BY USYG URQUHART, AND THE SWEDISH PROPOSAL FOR
A CHANGE IN THE NATURE OF THIS PRESENCE WAS NOT OPENLY
SUPPORTED BY OTHER DELEGATIONS PRESENT. END SUMMARY.

2. DETAILS OF MEETING: A. AFTER HIGHLIGHTING EVENTS IN

SOUTHERN LEBANON OVER PAST SEVERAL MONTHS USYG URQUHART MADE FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS IN SUPPORT OF HIS POSITION THAT WITHDRAWAL OF UNMO'S AT THIS TIME IS "UNTHINKABLE": (1) STRATEGIC POSITION ENJOYED BY THE FIVE UN OBSERVATION POSTS (OP'S) IS SUCH THAT RELINQUISHING THEM TO ANY ONE OF THE DEFACTO MILITARY FORCES OPERATING IN THE AREA WOULD HAVE A DESTABILIZING EFFECT, BOTH MILITARILY AND POLITICALLY; AND (2) TO REMOVE OR ALTER THE BASIC NATURE OF THE UN PRESENCE IN THE AREA WOULD REQUIRE SECURITY COUNCIL APPROVAL AND PUBLIC DISCUSSION CONCOMITANT WITH SUCH APPROVAL.

B. LEAD-OFF SPEAKER FOLLOWING INITIAL UN PRESENTATION WAS AMB PASTINEN (FINLAND). HE SUMMARIZED HIS RECENT VISIT TO UNTSO AND, WHILE EXPRESSING FINNISH GOVT CONCERN FOR UNMO SAFETY, EMPHASIZED FOLLOWING: (1) FINNISH GOVT SUPPORTS CONTINUED PRESENCE OF UN IN SOUTHERN LEBANON AND (2) WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, UNMO'S EXHIBIT HIGH MORALE AND POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD REQUIREMENT TO SERVE THERE.

C. MOST NEGATIVE POSITION VOICED BY FAR WAS THAT OF SWEDEN. WHILE SWEDISH DEP PERM REP SUNDBERG DID NOT REPEAT NOT ADVOCATE REMOVAL OF UNMO'S FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON, HE DID RECOMMEND THAT: (1) UN CONSIDER WITHDRAWING FROM "MOST DANGEROUS" OP'S (COMMENT: THREE OF THE FIVE ESTABLISHED OP'S COULD BE CONSTRUED TO FIT SUCH A CATEGORY), AND (2) CONFIDENTIAL

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UN UTILIZE MILITARY UNITS OR POLICE PROVIDED BY LEBANESE GOVT TO PROVIDE ESCORTS FOR UNMO'S INTO AND OUT OF OP'S. USYG URQUHART CITED FOLLOWING PRACTICAL LIMITATIONS TO SWEDISH PROPOSALS: (1) COST OF MOVING PERMANENT OP'S PLUS DESTABILIZING EFFECT (MENTIONED ABOVE); AND (2) LIMITATIONS OF PRESENTLY CONSTITUTED LEBANESE GOVT AND MILITARY FORCES IN ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER DEFACTO FORCES.

D. OTHER SUGGESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR FOR IMPROVING UN SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON INCLUDED FOLLOWING: (1) AUSTRALIA: POSSIBILITY OF USING HELICOPTERS IN PLACE OF SURFACE TRANSPORTATION TO EFFECT UNMO RELIEF TO AND FROM OP'S. IN REPLY TO THIS SUGGESTION USYG URQUHART CITED THE POLITICAL AND SAFETY PROBLEMS ANTICIPATED BUT AGREED TO REQUEST LT GEN SIILASVUO TO CHECK INTO POSSIBILITY. (2) FINLAND: POSSIBILITY OF HAVING HIGHLY VULNERABLE ITEMS (E.G. WRIST WATCHES) ISSUED DIRECTLY BY UN TO AVOID ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH REIMBURSEMENT, AND TO AVOID PROBABILITY THAT REIMBURSEMENT WILL BE LESS THAN FULL REPLACEMENT VALUE. F.T. LIU (SECRETARIAT) AGREED TO INVESTIGATE POSSIBILITY

OF UN SUPPLYING SUCH EQUIPMENT. (3) BELGIUM: POSSIBILITY
OF AUGMENTING UNTSO BY PROVIDING A BUILT-IN MILITARY
ESCORT CAPABILITY, REALIZING CURRENT INABILITY OF
LEBANESE GOVT TO PROVIDE SUCH. USYG URQUHART POINTED OUT
THAT SUCH AUGMENTATION COULD BE CONSTRUED AS AMOUNTING TO
BASIC CHANGE IN NATURE AND MISSION OF UNTSO, THEREBY RE-
QUIRING SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION AND POSSIBLY LOWERING THE
THRESHOLD OF "TEMPTATION TO VIOLENCE" BY THE DEFACTO FORCES
(4) IRELAND: RECOMMENDED ARMING OF UNMO'S FOR PERSONAL
PROTECTION. RECOMMENDATION FOUND NO VOCAL SUPPORT AMONG
OTHER DELEGATIONS PRESENT AND WAS REBUTTED BY USYG URQUHART
ON GROUNDS THAT SUCH ARMING WOULD, PARADOXICALLY, PROBABLY
MAKE LIFE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON EVEN MORE DANGEROUS FOR
UNMO'S. (5) USG: RECOMMENDATION THAT ALL DELEGATIONS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 00759

REPRESENTED AT MEETING QUIETLY BUT FIRMLY EXPRESS CONCERN

FOR UNMO'S SAFETY AND EQUIPMENT
LOSS THROUGH DIILOMATIC CHANNELS WITH THOSE NATIONS AND
GROUPS BEST IN POSITION TO EFFECT REDUCTION IN LEVEL OF
VIOLENCE, I.E. ISRAEL, LEBANON, SYRIA, AND DEFACTO FORCES.
RECOMMENDATION APPEARED TO BE WELL RECEIVED BY OTHER
DELEGATIONS PRESENT.

3. CONCLUSIONS: A. CONSENSUS OF MEETING APPEARED TO BE THAT
US RECOMMENDATION HAS BEST CHANCE OF EVEN MARGINAL
SUCCESS. (B) OTHER SUGGESTIONS (E.G , ARMING OF UNMO'S,
RELOCATION OF OP'S, PROVIDING MILITARY ESCORTS, DEPLOYMENT
BY HELICOPTERS) ARE PROBABLY ILL-ADVISED DUE TO A WHOLE
ARRAY OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY OBSTACLES TO BE EN-
COUNTERED. (C) THE SWEDISH DELEGATION APPEARS TO
BE THE ONLY UNTSO PERSONNEL CONTRIBUTOR ADVOCATING BASIC
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ALTERATION TO UNTSO PRESENCE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON.
ACCORDING TO ONE HIGHLY RELIABLE AND WELL-PLACED SOURCE,
PART OF SWEDISH CONCEEN MAY BE DUE TO ALLEGEDLY CONTINUING
SWEDISH BITTERNESS OVER RELIEF IN 1976 OF LT GEN
LILJESTRAND (SWEDEN) FROM COMMAND OF UNEF. SWEDES
APPARENTLY ATTRIBUTE THIS RELIEF TO THE DEEP PERSONALITY
CONFLICT WHICH EXISTED DN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
LILJESTRAND AND SIILASVUO (FINLAND). WHILE THE RELATION-
SHIP UNDOUBTEDLY DID LITTLE TO HELP LILJESTRAND'S
POSITION WHILE COMMANDING UNEF, PROFESSIONAL CONSENSUS IS
THAT LILJESTRAND'S BASIC PROBLEM WAS SIMPLY THAT HE WAS
NEITHER AN EFFECTIVE LEADER NOR MANAGER. SWEDES SEEM,
HOWEVER, NOT TO HAVE ACCEPTED THIS VERDICT AND PREFER TO
ATTRIBUTE CAUSE FOR RELIEF TO THE POOR PERSONAL
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO OFFICERS. SWEDISH ATTITUDE
TOWARD UN DUTY IN LEBANON MAY THEREFORE REFLECT EITHER
CONSCIOUS OR SUBCONSCIOUS ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT SIILASVUO'S
LEADERSHIP. YOUNG

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